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SUBJECT: MEDIA ANALYSIS OF ELECTION RESULTS: BAD OUTWEIGHS
GOOD

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In the wake of GRM's Constitutional Court validation on December 28 of the results of the October national elections, media outlets have analyzed the campaign season, suggesting that the "good" aspects of the elections were outweighed by the "bad" and "ugly." On one hand, the new Democratic Movement of Mozambique's (MDM) performance in the presidential race indicates that the new party could eventually provide an effective opposition to the ruling Mozambique Liberation Front's (Frelimo) longstanding political dominance, promoting multi-party democracy. However, party exclusions from the legislative polls, unrest during the campaign period, and ballot tampering undermined election legitimacy. END SUMMARY.

The Good) New Party Showing Promise

¶2. (U) MDM candidate Daviz Simango won 8.59% of the votes in the presidential race) a strong showing considering that Simango only launched the party on March 6, and faced a generally hostile campaign environment. Miguel de Brito, Mozambique Country Director for the Electoral Institute for Southern Africa, a group that promotes democracy in Africa, told the New York Times on October 30 that Simango's performance at the polls was a "good start" for a newcomer and that the results showed that MDM already had "some base" of support.

The Good) Election Day Process Functional, Calm

¶3. (U) Polling stations apparently had enough materials and staffing for voters. There were no reports of insufficient or missing supplies that kept citizens from casting their ballots, which is a significant logistical accomplishment considering that there were over 12,000 polling stations for a registered electorate of over 9.8 million people and that many polling stations were only accessible by 4-wheel-drive vehicles or helicopter, according to the Electoral Administration Technical Secretariat (STAE). However, CIP reported that there were proportionately fewer polling stations in opposition strongholds such as Zambezia and Nampula, meaning voters had to walk longer distances in those provinces to vote. There were no missing results sheets, an improvement from the 2004 election when over 1,000 polling station result sheets went missing, according to government-owned news agency AIM. Felisberto Naife, general director of the STAE, told AIM that as of November 8, nearly 97 per cent of the result sheets had been processed.

¶4. (U) Despite numerous incidents of unrest during the campaign, there was no significant reported violence on

Election Day itself. The European Union observers called the elections "well-managed" and "calm," according to Paris-based news agency AFP.

The Bad) More Pre-Election Unrest

¶15. (U) Mozambican media commented on the high level of tension compared with previous elections, including incidents of limited violence between supporters of Frelimo, Renamo, and the MDM. Political analysts and media speculated that the MDM's emergence threatened Frelimo and Renamo dominance and was the main cause of increased election-related unrest among all parties. For example, Lusa and the Mozambique Peace Process Bulletin (PPB) -- a reliable election-focused newsletter from the Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa and the Center for Public Integrity) routinely reported incidents of unrest during the 45-day campaign period, including sporadic violence among supporters of the main political parties, vandalism at party offices, damage to campaign materials, and moves to frustrate campaign parades and rallies. Although some unrest occurred during past elections, the PPB reported that the 1994, 1999, and 2004 elections had been generally "trouble free" and peaceful.

¶16. (U) Professors from Maputo's Eduardo Mondlane University blamed the unprecedented level of unrest on the MDM's emergence, according to an October 4 Lusa report. The respected Africa Monitor newsletter reported that Frelimo and Renamo see MDM as a "potential threat" to their respective "electoral aspirations," possibly impacting both parties' "status quo of domination."

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The Bad) Ballot Box Stuffing, Ballot Tampering

¶17. (U) Open sources cited various reports of ballot box stuffing) almost exclusively to Frelimo's benefit. Improbably high voter turnouts in several districts show that ballot box stuffing very likely took place. For example, cities including Chicualacula, Massagena, and Changara all had voter turnouts exceeding 90% and 98% of all votes in those cities went to Guebuza. In Ilha de Mozambique a teacher was arrested for reportedly trying to stuff ballots into a box in Jembesse, Lumbo. According to PPB, Renamo held a press conference to display the already-filled-out ballots, which all voted for Frelimo. At least 10% of the votes cast in the districts of Sofala, Nampula, Cabo Delgado, Zambezia were void) indicating a high likelihood of ballot tampering compared to the overall average of 4.3% for this election and the overall average of 3.9% in 2004. In most cases, invalid votes had more than one candidate selected on a single ballot, as if trying to cast two votes for two different candidates on the same ballot, according to the PPB.

The Ugly - Party Exclusion From Legislative Election

¶18. (U) Several commentators said the National Elections Commission's (CNE) ruling to exclude 14 parties--including MDM--from contesting the provincial polls could undermine the election's legitimacy. The Constitutional Council (CC), the highest court in the country, unanimously upheld the CNE's decision to exclude the parties from the parliamentary elections, saying that the parties had "contravened obligatory legal clauses." The Portuguese news agency Lusa reported that Mozambican political analyst Jose Jaime Macuane called the CNE's decision illegal and questioned the CNE's partiality. Xavier de Figueiredo, a Lusophone Africa expert and editor of the Africa Monitor, said in his September 24 and September 10 newsletters that the "relaxed compliance with the Law on Elections" together with the decision to "reject" the parties has led to a "climate of tension" that has permeated the election campaign. Independent legal

consultants opined that the CNE used "excessive zeal" in applying the law, and Mozambican jurist Custodio Duma said that it would be difficult to call the elections "free and fair," according to Lusa on October 1. A September 9 Savana editorial asserted that the credibility of the elections would be difficult to establish because the CNE is "justly or unjustly" seen to be at Frelimo's service. On September 2, ambassadors from donor countries said that the candidate approval process was arbitrary and lacked transparency, according to the French press agency AFP.

COMMENT

19. (SBU) Some good aspects of the elections process indicate that there is still hope for democracy in Mozambique. Based on its performance at the polls, MDM could become an opposition party strong enough to counter Frelimo in a way that Renamo, at least under its current leader Afonso Dhlakama, has not been able to do. Unfortunately, the bad and the ugly--party exclusions and pre-election unrest--blighted the elections and suggest that the ruling Frelimo party may yet be unwilling to let multi-party democracy flourish.
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